

Who Profits from the Prophet?

Walter Rea

When Walter Martin wrote *The Kingdom of the Cults* in the 1960s, his definition of a cult was very gentle. He said:

By the term "cult" I mean nothing derogatory to any group so classified. A cult, as I define it, is any religious group which differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief and practice, from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture. I may add to this that a cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person's interpretation of the Bible.

Martin goes on to list three major cults—Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Christian Scientists—but leaves out Seventh-day Adventists entirely. In fact, he defends his choice of exclusion by adding to the Appendix a section entitled, "The Puzzle of Seventh-day Adventism."

In his second chapter, "Scaling the Language Barrier," Martin refers directly and specifically to Seventh-day Adventists, but does not seem to perceive it:

It is therefore possible for the modern theologians to use the terminology of the Bible and historic theology, but in an entirely different sense from that intended by the writers of Scripture . . . one must face the fact that the originators and promulgators of cult theology have done exactly the same thing to the semantic structure of Christian Theology as did the modern theologians. So it is possible . . . to utilize the terminology of Bible Christianity with absolute freedom, having already redesigned these terms in a theological framework of his own making and to his own liking, but almost always at direct variance with the historically accepted meanings of the terms. The student of cultism then, must be prepared to scale the language barrier of terminology. First, he must recognize

that it does exist, and second, he must acknowledge the very real fact that unless terms are defined when one is either speaking or reading cult theology, the semantic jungle which the cults have created will envelop him, making difficult, if not impossible, a proper contrast between the teachings of the cults and those of orthodox Christianity.

Had Martin's definition been more precise and his observations more astute, surely he would have included Seventh-day Adventists. He seems to sense this error of judgment years later in an interview in the July 1983 *Adventist Currents*, when he reviews his past contacts with the Adventists and concludes that either he was misled by some of the spokesmen of the church or they really did not have the authority to represent the true picture of the church.

It is understandable that Martin should fall into the error of misreading the facts about Adventists. Many others have done the same. It is because the inquisitor is often led to deal with the promises of Seventh-day Adventists and not their practices. Martin knew some Adventist ministers as friends; they were not fanatics. He was fooled by the fantasies he was told; he was never shown the facts. The language of the cult as used by Adventists colored his vision; very seldom, if ever, are the practitioners, such as the ministers of the flock, or laymen, allowed to speak for the church. Rather the seminarian, the theologian, the institutional employee, or the retired monastic mind is the spokesman for what is called "Adventist truth." Because of this forced practice, the true picture of Adventists is seldom seen or known by the non-Adventist. This was the problem for Walter Martin, and he seems to sense it when he says years later that he was lied to by some in the church and double-crossed by most concerning his agreements with the church about the distribution of his book *The Truth About Seventh Day Adventists*. This exchange was printed in *Adventist Currents*:

CURRENTS: Was there a prior agreement as to what would happen to your book when it came out?

MARTIN: Oh, yes. We would distribute the book and promote it through Christian bookstores, through *Eschaton Magazine*, and anywhere else we could.

CURRENTS: Even though you had been doing that for a few years?

MARTIN: I have faithfully done that. And they were to take my book and get it into all the Adventist bookstores and publishing houses so that the Adventist could see the work I had done. They reneged on that. The General Conference reneged on that, and Anderson was very upset.

Walter Rea, a former member of the Seventh-day Adventist church, was removed from his post by church officials after publishing his critical book, *The White Lie*.



CURRENTS: Do you know who to define as General Conference in that case?

MARTIN: I don't, and wouldn't make an accusation. But they did not keep their word. As a result, only *Questions on Doctrine* came out in Seventh-day Adventist bookstores. *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* did not. In addition to that, they wrote a book to answer my book without giving my book a hearing. That was wrong . . . What they did was censor the Adventist people.

In contrast, Anthony Hoekema had no difficulties whatsoever in recognizing Adventism for what it was and said so in *The Four Major Cults*, published in 1963, where he lists

"The Adventists have always taught that they are the exclusive community of the saved and that he or she must be an Adventist to enter the kingdom if he or she has ever had the opportunity to hear the church's message."

Adventism as one of the four. He had no trouble doing so because his Chapter 6, "The Distinctive Traits of the Cult," is neither gentle nor evasive, but clear, to the point, and inclusive. His operational definitions are such that anyone can use them to evaluate whatever cult or noncult he wishes. He lists these traits as follows (pp. 378-85):

1. An Extra-Scriptural Source of Authority.
2. The Denial of Justification by Grace Alone.
3. The Devaluation of Christ.
4. The Group as the Exclusive Community of the Saved.
5. The Group's Central Role in Eschatology.

He then goes on to apply these five traits to the Seventh-day Adventists. Their extra-scriptural authority is Ellen White, their prophet. Their justification before God is accomplished by works. Christ is interpreted by Ellen White through her writings. No scholar is allowed to advance any idea of importance that does not agree with any statement she has ever made. The Adventists have always taught that they are the exclusive community of the saved and that he or she must be an Adventist to enter the kingdom if he or she has ever had the opportunity to hear the churches message. Finally, the book *Great Controversy* (Pacific Press, 1888), again written by Ellen White, makes Adventism the central figure in closing events.

Adventists have in the past and at the present denied all five traits or categories, but as always it is the language barrier, or the use the cults make of theological terminology that throws the unaware off. While denying that any of the traits exist in their church, the keepers of the Adventist press, the thought-molders of the ministry, and the public relation experts go right on selling a religion that exhibits all five of them to the membership through the church press and programs.

Like most conservative organizations, there is little freedom of expression or choice for Adventists concerning attitudes or actions that conflict with church thought or tradition. Because

of the belief that it is wrong to marry outside the church, there is little influx of ideas from other individuals or groups or other forms of expression of belief. No one teaches in Adventist colleges, academies, or grade schools except denominationally trained workers and believers. Even the administration of the college handpicks its teachers. Thus free expression and the exchange of opinions are effectively controlled by the system. If the label "church" was stripped from the organization, it could be seen as a tightly controlled political organization using the people's money to control those same people. The recent studies of the political structure of the church published in the March 1984 *Spectrum* would seem to confirm this view.

These observations have been confirmed over the years, but recent events can be cited for evidence that all is not well within the structure. In the early seventies a great deal of information came to the fore concerning the writings of Ellen White, the church's prophet. This information was conveyed to readers of *Spectrum*, an Adventist journal for scholars, in 1980 by Donald McAdams, president of the Texas-based Southwestern Adventist College:

In 1970, 55 years after the death of Ellen G. White, Adventist scholars began for the first time to examine critically her writings and to share their conclusions with the community of Adventist intellectuals. The scholarship started with a cluster of articles in the autumn 1970 number of *Spectrum*. Other articles, a book and several unpublished manuscripts followed. Ten years later, we can see that the 1970s introduced a new era in the study of Ellen White.

Ronald Numbers, a professor in the church's School of Medicine at Loma Linda, California, kicked off the smoldering controversy over Ellen's reliability and authority with his book *Prophecies of Health* in 1976. It caused great consternation among Adventist leaders and was discussed widely by Adventist scholars, and even received some national attention. The church wrote a defense against it and distributed it to its membership.

It was not that the material was so new that got Numbers into trouble and later fired. It was not that he proved that others before White had written what she said she had been told by God in visions. It was not even that he had discovered that large parts of her "visions" on health had been lifted from others, often word for word. What did isolate Numbers from the system was the attitude he expressed in his Preface:

In so doing, I have parted company with those Adventist scholars who insist on the following presuppositions: (1) that the Holy Spirit has guided the Advent movement since the early 1840s, (2) "that Ellen Harmon White was chosen by God as his messenger and her work embodied that of a prophet," (3) "that as a sincere, dedicated Christian and a prophet, Ellen White could not and did not fail," and (4) that the testimony of Mrs. White's fellow-believers "may be accepted as true and correct to the best of the memory of the individuals who reported."^{*} It seems to me that such statements, particularly the last two, are more properly conclusions than presuppositions.

^{*}Arthur L. White, [introduction to Ellen White], "Ellen G. White and the Shut Door Questions."



The failure of William Miller's (left) predictions about the Second Coming of Christ led to the founding of Seventh-day Adventism. Joseph Bates (middle) and J. N. Andrews helped establish the church.

That did it. Those thoughts and ideals might be acceptable rules of thought for scholarly research, but Numbers should have known that knowingly or unknowingly he was violating the cardinal rule of Adventist scholarship, which was that one must have a presupposition, a born or cultivated bias, to deal with any of the facts and ideas concerning denominational history. Those presuppositions and biases must be made to color the Adventist scene.

There was another shocker in Ronald Numbers's book besides the lack of presuppositions, his casting doubt on Ellen White's integrity as well as her credibility. The church is involved in health in a big way, with Ellen White, directed by God, of course, getting the credit. In one of her strongest health "visions" she received the instructions from heaven to abstain from flesh foods of all kinds. So strong was she on this issue that one of the badges of Adventists is vegetarianism. She is quoted in her testimonies as saying:

I have been instructed that flesh food has a tendency to animalize the nature, to rob men and women of that love and sympathy which they should feel for everyone, and to give the lower passions control over the higher powers of being. . . . We are not to make the use of flesh food a test of fellowship, but we should consider the influence that professed believers who use flesh foods have over others. . . . Shall we not bear a decided testimony against the indulgence of perverted appetite? Will any who are ministers of the gospel, proclaiming the most solemn truth ever given to mortals, set an example in returning to the fleshpots of Egypt? Will those who are supported by the tithe from God's storehouse permit themselves by self-indulgence to poison the life-giving current flowing through their veins? Will they disregard the light and warnings that God has given them?

Yet, in spite of the fact that Adventists put vegetarianism on such a high moral and spiritual plain because of Ellen

White and her writings, Numbers charges that White ate meat much of her life, a charge the White Estate has acknowledged. Numbers refers to Willie, Ellen White's son, when he says,

When the inevitable rumors began circulating that the prophets had not always lived up to her own standards, Ellen White protested that she had indeed been "a faithful health reformer," as the members of her family could testify. But even her favorite son Willie related a different story. Years after his mother's death he told of the many setbacks in her struggle to overcome meat, of the difficulties in finding competent vegetarian cooks, and of lunch baskets filled with turkey, chicken, and tinned tongue. Yet despite these lapses, both he and his mother seem to have regarded themselves as true vegetarians—in principle if not in practice.

Such a double standard led many of the readers of Numbers's book to wonder why, if as White claimed, God gave her instructions in these matters, didn't she follow his advice, or did she know all along that God had said nothing of the kind?

Another disruption followed on the heels of Ronald Numbers's book that not only questioned the integrity of Ellen White and her ideas but the reliability of her theology. Many of those familiar to Adventist history, such as A. F. Ballenger, W. W. Prescott, L. R. Conradi, and W. W. Fletcher, had in times past raised questions concerning the main pillars of Adventist doctrine, such as the twenty-three hundred days, the heavenly sanctuary, and the pre-Advent judgment. Now it was Desmond Ford's turn.

Ford, chairman of the Theology Department of Avondale College in Australia, was exchange professor at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California when he accepted an invitation to speak to the local forum chapter on October 27, 1979. At that meeting he brought to his listeners' attention the inconsistencies of the church's position. Martin and Donald Barnhouse had determined and stated years before that they considered the Adventist judgment just another example of the



The Washington, D.C., headquarters of Seventh-day Adventism.

face-saving double-talk employed by the church, considering that the Millerite movement of 1844 had failed with its date-setting to produce the Second Coming of Christ. What the Adventists had invented was the theology that when Christ did not come—and, as they believed, the door of probation was closed for the world—that they had misunderstood the whole concept. So now they felt that God had hidden the real truth to test the believers as to their sincerity and that now the judgment was really going on in the heavenly sanctuary above, where no one could see it, thus not being able to prove that the idea was right or wrong.

The outcome of the Ford review was never in doubt. He, like Numbers before him, did not bring his suppositions to the committee at Glacier View, where the meeting of his peers took place. They demanded his resignation with a strong statement in defense of Ellen White and the church's position:

- (a) MILLS: Are we to tell our people that we have been wrong? Doesn't Sister White use this argument?
- (b) STRAND: The crucial issue is how Ellen White used these texts (Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6).
- (c) WILSON: You never listen to your brethren. If you believe in Ellen White, and the brethren tell you what they think, you had better practice what you preach. If you are not willing to accept the counsel of your brethren. . . .
- (d) WILSON: It is not the role of the *Review* to give contrary views equal time, or to promote "new light" before that light has been studied by responsible groups. . . . The bottom line, of course, is the role of Ellen White in doctrinal matters. [Spectator, November 1980]

It was clear from the meeting that there was to be no honest inquiry into Adventist belief or practice. It was clear that Ford, for all of his degrees, including two Ph.D.'s, was out and that the scholars who had taken part in his review were only allowed to be there to provide support for the decision concerning him that had been made long before the event. It also was a remarkable display of cultic double-talk when the church told the world that Ellen White was a lesser light and the Bible was the church's first authority.

Raymond F. Cottrell, formerly associate editor of the *Adventist Review*, the Adventist inhouse organ, protested:

One person after another has been raising them [questions] for 75 years. As a church, we have dealt decisively with the people who did so, one by one, but we have done little or nothing yet by way of providing the church with viable answers to the questions they asked. We have treated the questioners as if they were trouble-makers, and the questions as if they did not exist, except in someone's perverted imagination. It would be difficult to defend this long-standing default on our part as a responsible, Christian way of relating to what we all recognize as a major theological problem.

Once again the Adventist church was brought to the door of truth and inquiry by one or more of its scholars, but church leaders chose to keep that door shut. Once again they were confronted with honest men seeking honest answers, but chose to take the popular, dishonest course. As always, the super-salesmen of the system were willing to use the language of the cult to deceive the unaware and ignorant. But this time the price was much higher. The learned, the talented, and the moneyed people of the church began to raise questions and to withhold their services and funds. Questions surfaced not only about the integrity of Ellen White but her reliability in doctrinal matters. After all, in over one hundred and forty years, not one major or minor denomination had accepted the Adventist theory of the investigative judgment, and many thought that over half of their own theologians did not accept it either.

Two of the biggest explosions for the church were set off in the 1980s by Ronald Graybill and this writer. The latter episode focused worldwide attention on the misuse and abuse of the materials handled by the church. The Graybill affair reviewed for all who wished to see the control exercised by the White Estate—the keepers of the keys in all matters of the Adventist prophet, Ellen White—over the facts and fables handed out since the church's founding.

Ronald Graybill had been a research assistant for thirteen years and was designated an associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate. In April 1983, Graybill went before the committee at Johns Hopkins University for his doctoral dissertation "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century. He was successful in that defense but it was to be the last of his victories. He had placed a five-year embargo on his manuscript, but without his consent a copy of his work was obtained and circulated throughout the church world-wide.

The results were predictable and immediate. The back page of the November 1983 *Adventist Review* announced to its readers:

The dissertation and its impact on Elder Graybill's ability to function as a spokesman for the Ellen White Estate were discussed at a meeting of Ellen G. White Estate board of trustees on November 3. The board voted to place Graybill on administrative leave, to suggest that he prepare a written response to questions raised concerning the dissertation, and to invite him to meet with the board at its next session (December 3), when the matter is to be discussed further.

Fast on the heels of the article came another in *Christianity*:

Today. Another Scholar Is in Jeopardy over Ellen White." Author Randy Frame theorizes:

Douglas Hackleman, editor of the magazine *Adventist Currents*, which holds the nontraditional view of White, calls the issue of Graybill's procedural violations a "red herring." "The real problem," Hackleman says, "is that for most Adventists, the dissertation will have the effect of demythologizing Ellen White." Hackleman asserts that a decision by the foundation not to retain Graybill would testify to its tendencies to hide the facts about White.

The process of "demythologizing Ellen White" had gotten into high gear in the preceding years, but Graybill's work brought out several points and new material to support these facts: (1) skepticism about Ellen White's prophetic gifts, (2) doubts about her character and integrity, and (3) that Ellen White might have produced visions as they were needed to maintain her authority. The dissertation also suggests that she was somewhat of a witch doctor, calling the wrath of God on all those who refused her instructions or exhortations.

But Graybill's real problem was not, as others before him had said, his lack of presupposition and his candor. It was that as a privileged member of the White estate, he had used material that had not been released for public scrutiny. Much of what he used had been classified by the White estate as secret, or sensitive, or embarrassing to persons still living, or, as in the case of national defense, top secret. He had violated the basic rule of the White estate, and that was to go public with material that Arthur White, the grandson of Ellen White and the real keeper of the keys since his grandmother's death, had forbidden to be seen.

Neal Wilson, General Conference President of the Seventh-day Adventists, tried to make the situation sound spiritual when he reported to the church:

On the other hand, the record shows, according to Dr. Olson of the White Estate, that Graybill has been a productive worker and has written articles, prepared shelf documents, and traveled extensively in behalf of the White Estate, giving lectures that have helped to answer some of the questions being raised in recent years. Graybill affirms his confidence in the belief that Ellen G. White was divinely inspired. That she had the prophetic gift is believable because her teachings are Biblical.

Even the intellectuals in the church tried to save Graybill with praise and special pleadings.

1. Ron constantly reminded us that the messenger and the message could not be separated from her time and circumstances and still be correctly understood. His careful research into the "life and times" of a particular statement brought confidence to the Adventist historical fraternity and to scores of thoughtful laypeople.

2. Ron Graybill gave the Ellen G. White Estate a credibility that it never had before because he was able to approach her writings in a very open way. He made it possible for us to gain a greater appreciation of Ellen White as a person, a mother, a writer, as well as a messenger. With Ron Graybill gone, the White Estate has lost most of its credibility.

3. I am very sorry to see Ron Graybill go. He has been consistently trusted by the academic community to give the straight story.

4. Ron Graybill was one person we could turn to who was faithful to the evidence and at the same time redemptive. At workers' meetings in my conference, he was candid, nondefensive, open with the facts, and at the same time enhanced Ellen White's role. [Spectrum, March 1984]

What is easy to overlook is that Graybill first took the material without permission, an act he had criticized in others. Then he put a five-year hold on the manuscript, showing that he either did not want the church to know what he knew or was determined that they shouldn't know. Finally, when he was cornered by circumstances he created himself, he ran for cover to keep his position. Surely these are not the actions of an honorable hero. It would seem that Graybill became less than honest in order to save a dishonest position.

My phone started ringing at 6 A.M. that Thursday, October 23, 1980, and, although to a lesser extent, it has not stopped ringing since. The cause of all this activity was an article by John Dart, religion editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. John had interviewed me several days before concerning the work of Ellen White. After taking pictures and looking over the

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research, Dart went back to his office. Before publication he called and asked if I considered White a plagiarist, to which I replied that the research would indicate that she was. And that was the way the article came out that Thursday, with banner headlines saying "Plagiarism Found in Prophet Books."

The article was supposed to have been carried on page 17 of the religion section, but instead was on pages 1, 3, and 21. It was later syndicated in more than one thousand newspapers and reported on radio and television around the world. It was not the first time the charge had been made, but the first time the charge and the evidence had been popularized or sensationalized. Dart had been informed that I was the authority at the time on the "copy work" in Ellen White's writings, but it seemed that even he was surprised at the coverage his story was given.

The church had been made aware of the charges in a special meeting in Glendale, California, in that same year. There, after seeing some of the evidence, the committee of eighteen scholars from across the United States had decided by vote that the evidence was alarming—that is, that it was new and significant and should receive additional study—and that the people of the church should be told. It was also agreed that

scholars should work with me to find out the extent of the copying and that the committee should meet from time to time to compare facts.

The committee acted, however, without the consent or blessing of the high administration and its council, called "PREXAD." Less than two months later it gave its report to the study committee in a letter, which said in part:

2. That the administration, under the guidance of the White Estate, organize an in-depth study of the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy to attempt to discover not only the similarities between the writings of Ellen G. White and other authors, but to also discover the dissimilarities between these writers. . . . We recommend that this program be initiated first by a comprehensive study of the book, *Desire of Ages*. It may be that this study will be sufficient to establish patterns and methods, which are applicable to others of her works and that a further intensive search of their books may be unnecessary.

3. That intensive study over a period of years has largely served its purpose, and that now the General Conference will ask other individuals to carry on this work to the degree deemed necessary by the leadership of the church. . . . It will at the same time enable the church to more fully educate the membership to understand. . . .

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In essence, the PREXAD committee nullified the reasons the committee of scholars had been called in the first place and took away the right of the people paying the bills to know. This was a common practice and had been done in past cases of this nature and was used later to keep the membership in ignorance concerning the financial scandal of the Davenport Post Office deals and the kickbacks and payoffs to some of the leading clergy.

It really did not surprise those of us who knew some of the members of that group, especially its leading adviser and the president of the General Conference, Neal Wilson, for he had written to me on July 2, 1980, saying:

It is also a part of the policy of the church that those of us who are ministers of the gospel and employed by this church will not appeal to any court of law for redress. This is especially true in areas of church polity, doctrine, and spiritual activity. We have by accepting ordination and appointment as a minister in this church limited our personal freedom. . . .

Our concern over your activities does not arise because you have done studies or research, or that you feel that something should be done and our people should be better informed, or that you may hold some different personal ideas and convictions. Our concern arises when you launch a relentless crusade and feel impelled to take it to the church, publicly and privately, through meetings, and circulating materials. . . . If you have heard that you would be fired it is unfounded rumor. . . .

But the rumor was true. One of the members of the president's committee, Elder Bradford, had visited me in Los Angeles months before and had stated that every time he walked down the hall of the General Conference someone came out of a door muttering my name, both in relation to the Davenport affair and the Ellen G. White cover-up. So, I was fired in November 1980, and the church hired as many lawyers as it could afford to protect the names and positions of those who supported the church's pronouncements, whether they were right or wrong. For me it was over, after thirty-six years of ducking and weaving whenever I told a truth that the church did not want revealed. Once again, truth was on the scaffold and wrong was on the throne in Adventism.

A few months later my book *The White Lie* was published and received additional attention from the public press. Kenneth A. Briggs wrote in the *New York Times* on November 6, 1982: "Walter Rea has inflamed the issues confronting the cult with incontrovertible evidence he provides in the *The White Lie*." Also, Richard N. Ostling in *Time* magazine of August 2, 1982, wrote: "*The White Lie* is a bombshell which has shocked the church."

The book was also a hot item in the church, but not in the same manner. All over the world, members were discouraged from reading it, and Adventist Book Stores refused to order it. In Australia, where we lectured in behalf of the local lay groups, the people were told in the Adventist paper the *Australian Record*:

The leadership of the church at all levels wishes the membership to know that they do not believe loyal church members would be helped in any way by [Rea's] visit to this Division. They deplore and disassociate themselves from the activities of any group which promotes Walter Rea and his attacks on the church.

At the same time, and often on the same page, the church would advertise a book entitled *Omega*, written by Lewis Walton:

Coming Soon to Your Friendly Adventist Book Centre. . . .

The author of this new book suggests that we look at some of the things happening currently within the church in light of those early events. This is the type of book that will be read and reread many times as we examine ourselves and our current stance compared with history.

The main thrust of the Walton book seemed to be that anyone with any "outside" educational learning or an IQ over 85 seemed to be a threat to the church, which leaves one wondering where that puts Walton and church leadership.

My studies and *The White Lie* laid open for all to see several new problems concerning the Adventist church. With the Adventists always using the argument that a prophet and its people should be tested and judged by their fruits, why had the Adventists and Mrs. White failed the tests so badly? The Davenport affair should have clearly showed that a portion of the leadership and clergy were dishonest, if not corrupted by



Walter Rea was asked to leave the church after publication of his book *The White Lie*.

bribes and kickbacks. Ellen White had often lied about her visions and the source of her materials or, even worse, could not tell the difference between truth and fiction in her value structure. She had even written to the flock at the very time of her enormous plagiarizing that:

Many who are seeking a preparation for the Lord's work think it essential to accumulate large volumes of historical and theological writings. They suppose that the study of these works will be a great advantage to them in learning how to reach the people. This is an error. As I see shelves piled with these books, some of them starely looked into, I think: Why spend money for that which is not bread?

And:

And, to a great degree, theology, as studied and taught, is but a record of human speculation, serving only to "darken counsel by words without knowledge."

Yet, over 1,200 volumes were found in her library, and the works of those "speculations" were copied by her in the name of God and visions. If respect for human dignity, human rights, difference of opinion, and open discussion of issues is a mark of a viable healthy society, then Adventism has failed the test. Finally, credibility both for Ellen White and her people has been tarnished, perhaps for all time. Even the admission in 1984 that perhaps 50 percent or more of what was written in *Great Controversy*, the keystone in the Adventist arch of theology, was copied from others was only a half-truth. They referred to only the historical sections copied. If the material that was not historical but theological and devotional was added to her copy program, the rate would be more like 80 to 90

percent.

In the Fall 1983 issue of *FREE INQUIRY*, Vern Bullough, dean of Natural Science at the State University College of New York at Buffalo, gives his ideas about some of the principles of humanist tradition:

- A. Traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience are not for us.
- B. Moral values derive from human experience.
- C. Reason and intelligence are the most effective instruments that humans possess.
- D. . . . we reject all religious, ideological, or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull the intellect, and dehumanize the personality.
- E. We emphasize that sexuality is part of being human.
- ... F. Individuals must experience a full range of liberties if we are to enhance freedom and human dignity.
- G. We are opposed to barriers erected on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, age, or other types of minority status.

In no way could Adventists or Adventism qualify as being concerned with the individual soul or spirit. Any idea, principle, creed, or faith that cannot stand the test of inquiry or discussion should not be said to represent any truth, small or large. How could it? Authoritarian control is not faith or reason, it is simply tyranny over the human mind and spirit.

So who profits from the Adventist prophet? Surely not the world at large, which after more than 140 years of evangelism, propaganda, and promotion has accepted nothing that she wrote or said. Not the other religions of the world, which still have their own profits to care for, their own programs to push. Who profits? The administrators, the fanatics, and the system. The administrators who, without regard for love or human values, drive the people before them like flocks to a sheep dip. The fanatics, who refuse to allow any truth or interpretation of truth to prevail over their own conscience, full of fears and foibles. The system, whose pronouncements remain moral, while its thinking remains amoral and its actions immoral.

No matter what is written or recorded about Ellen White as the Adventist prophet, no matter how many rhetorical games are played with her "inspiration," very few members follow her instruction in much of anything. Her counsel is used as a whipping post for fanatics to tie their fellow members to, the easier to torture them with their judgments. Such a practice also allows administrators to piously posture while they largely ignore her instruction in regard to their own lives. The Davenport debacle, with other examples of mismanagement, shows clearly that Ellen White no longer controls the Adventist membership, the administrators do. But those same administrators, by abuse of their trust and in order to obtain liberty for themselves and license for their friends, have lynched the very woman they profess to adore. Adventism must now either rescue itself from the fanatical course its leadership has steered it toward or forever lose its viability in the community of human beings. Time will tell if resurrection will come too late. ■